

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS

WEST COAST OF AFRICA;

WITH REMARKS ON

THE SLAVE-TRADE AND THE SUPPLY OF COTTON.

BY

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LONDON :

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.

1862.

LONDON : W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS

PREFACE.

THE following pages are principally compiled from notes made by the Author during his sojourn on the West Coast of Africa, and from papers written by him, and submitted to the Royal Geographical Society. He formerly entertained no intention to write a book; but as current events are attracting the notice of the public to the West Coast of Africa, the Slave Trade, and the supply of Cotton, he deemed the present period a favourable opportunity to produce this small work.

J. F. N. H.

Cardiff, May 19, 1862.

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EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS
ON
THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA,
ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND.—PASSENGERS ON BOARD THE FORE-RUNNER.—THE ISLAND OF MADEIRA.—THE CITY OF FUNCHAL.

IN the spring of 185—, duty demanding my presence on the western coast of Africa, I reluctantly prepared to quit my quiet English home, and embark for that deadly region, so justly dreaded, and associated in the mind with every horror.

As no alternative presented itself, and the call of duty is imperative, with gloomy forebodings I seated myself in the train for Plymouth, my melancholy anticipations not being much ameliorated by overhearing a bystander at the railway station, on observing the words “West Coast of Africa,” painted on my baggage,

exclaim—"By Jove, a nice place to go to!" While another, attracted by his ejaculation, added—"Thank heaven, I'm not bound there!" and a third, possessing a compassionate heart, cried commiseratingly—"Poor fellow! I wonder whether he will ever return!"

I speedily arrived at Plymouth, and towards evening found myself on board the African mail steamer Forerunner; and shortly afterwards the signal gun was fired; the sharp "clicking" of the catches of the capstan mingling with the merry song of the sailors heaving up anchor, was heard; the lively bounding motion of the little craft as she came head to the waves, was felt; a parting health and "God speed you" was drunk by the passengers' friends and the port authorities, and we put to sea, while the ruddy sun sinking behind Mount Edgcumbe, bathed in roseate light the grassy lawns, deepened the shadows among the quiet glades, and purpled the noble woods, which render so beautiful that lovely spot—my last view and latest reminiscence of dear old England, which many of my fellow-passengers were, and I feared I myself might be, doomed never again to behold.

Thus I quitted England, and at this point of my narrative, I should, if I followed the invariable custom of travellers, record my "thoughts on leaving home;" but as these, though generally very pretty and sentimental in themselves, are extremely uninteresting to all but the person concerned, I suppress mine, and merely remark, I felt exceedingly uncomfortable at the prospect of a year's sojourn in—and if the reader is curious respecting my sentiments, I would beg him to imagine his own, if he were consigned to—a place bearing the ominous and uninviting appellation of the "White Man's Grave."

Meditating on this sombre subject, I walked the deck for some time, but my reflections being thus mournful, I, by way of diverting my ideas, and with the view of making the acquaintance of my brothers in affliction, descended into the saloon, where I fully expected to discover visages as doleful as was probably my own, and to hear the place resounding with lugubrious lamentations. Instead of the fulfilment of the first-named expectation, I beheld, to my utter astonishment, countenances con-

torted with laughter; and I heard, in lieu of lamentations, uproarious mirth mingled with the vivacious explosions of champagne corks!

Over these bacchanalian revellers presided a striking object, in the person of a short, stout, rosy individual, whose aspect and jovial features rendered him a worthy representative of the jolly god himself, and as this character will figure frequently in these pages, I proceed to sketch him. His good-natured, quaint physiognomy was adorned with a superabundant beard, and was almost obscured by hair, composing an effigy comparable only to one of those antique water-shoots so often seen on old churches; with the exception that whereas these grotesque creations are generally furnished with flowing locks, my friend's head was totally denuded of this ornate appendage, causing a still greater and indescribable comicality of countenance. The facetious expression of his physiognomy, would, on the stage, have insured the owner's success in any comedy, and, as I observed, he never spoke but to set the table in a roar. His face was obviously "the index to his mind."

This hilarity, and the free-and-easy familiarity which appeared to exist among the company, I thought rather extraordinary when exhibited by persons I considered doomed to destruction ; but soon discovered they had previously met on “the coast,” which knowledge in some measure reassured my perturbation of spirit, inasmuch as I beheld before me visible instances of Europeans who had in safety escaped the terrors of the pestilential climate, and who appeared but little to dread their return ; yet, as former experience had taught me that the more deadly a climate the less do resident Europeans appear to dread it, and the more are they reckless of life, their jollity, proceeding as it might from mere bravado, and real fear they would fain forget, did not carry so much consolation as it would otherwise have done. .

The remaining passengers, I learnt, were persons unacquainted with “the coast,” and who, as they did not appear that evening, were probably bewailing their fate in the solitude of their respective cabins. • These numbered among them—as I afterwards discovered—characters as original, in their different forms, as my friend

of the hirsute countenance; and as the reader will meet them down "the coast," and it may be interesting to note how many are alive when I am homeward bound, I shall on another occasion introduce them.

I now return to the matter immediately pertaining to the voyage.

After our departure from Plymouth, land was first sighted one morning about sunrise, and consisted in the rugged island of Porto Santo lying on the starboard beam; and on the port bow the culminating peak of the Island of Madeira, looming misty and grey in relief of the golden sky, above the clouds obscuring the horizon.

When we had proceeded, and Porto Santo was lying on the quarter, the favourable breeze that had hitherto followed ceased, and became so gentle that, although all the canvas was displayed, the steam forced the ship to outstrip the wind, and the useless sails shivered for want of the filling gale. Now we experienced the far-famed amenity of the climate, and the novelty of the scene. Paradise itself could not excel in delicious softness of atmosphere, and nothing

could exceed the beauty of the marine picture which opened to view. It was nearly a calm; the ocean, sea-green in colder latitudes, had changed its colour to a bright blue, and the cerulean expanse; broken only by the serrated mountain-ranges of Madeira, and studded with the islands of the Deserta group, floating on the horizon, and faintly seen melting into the vivid azure sky, gleamed like boundless sapphire set with opal. Fitful breezes cooled the air without ruffling the glassy surface of the water, which undulated with a long ground swell, rippleless and foamless, except when whitened by the pearly spray occasionally thrown from the steamer's prow, and the seething snow left in the wake. The foreground was occupied by a becalmed sailing ship, which, like a sea-fowl, rose and fell upon the swell, alternately dipping the ends of her stunsail booms as she rolled. Her canvas was spread alow and aloft, while wooing the fleeting zephyrs, and now filled and then flapped, as if the wind, forgetting its office, overcome by the heat of the day had fallen asleep, and was drowsily endeavouring to arouse itself to the performance of its duty.

Exchanging colours our vessel dashed past the stranger as a glittering four-in-hand passes a lowly dray on a turnpike road, and before many hours had elapsed, was steaming along the north coast of the island of Madeira, where the land gently slopes from the culminating point, and where little of the famed cultivation and fertility displays itself; but whatever is wanting in softness is supplied by sublimity, and the panorama was gradually unfolded in majestic grandeur. We beheld retreating within the side of the lofty mountain a vast cloud-canopied amphitheatre, so dark in concave, no eye could penetrate its inmost recess, while the sun glancing on, and illuminating the wood-clothed horns of the crescent, projected them prominent in bold relief.

Passing onwards, we, at length, as though leaving the land, stood out to sea, for the purpose of doubling the long and cavernous rocky promontory, which stretches far away in the direction of Porto Santo; and as we advanced nearer the head we stood still further towards sea in order to avoid a large insular rock, situated about half a mile from the shore, although the passage between us was apparently easy, and

would have saved some hours. On asking the master the reason why he, especially on so propitious a day, preferred the longer route, he replied, "Well, one might go inside—some do; but it's ticklish navigation, and it's always best to be on the safe side." Well had it been for the little Forerunner, and for many of the souls on board, had she possessed the sense of hearing, and, on another occasion—as will appear by the sequel—power to practise her wary master's warning axiom!

When we arrived at the head of, and were about to double the promontory, the main body of the island was enshrouded in mist, far above which, and like a burning star, the aspiring peak of the isle was revealed, glowing with the rays of the morning sun. Having rounded this headland, we were on the coast of the beautiful, fertile, south side, and entered a smooth bay, whose brightest blue waters were margined by a fringe of white surf, where the tide, breaking on the beach, laved the feet of the low honeycombed cliffs, and where the breeze, which came to us fresh and cool from the land and laden with perfume, waved the broad green leaves of the

bananas, and agitated with tremulous motion the feathery foliage of the wild cane, which grew down to the very water's edge. Here the surrounding country is an undulating champaign; divided with hedged fields; intersected by roads passing over hill and down dale; and the land, with the exception of the summits of the highest hills, which were crowned by dark pine forests, is a garden of cultivation. The landscape with this difference, and varied with dark and wooded glens, reminded me somewhat of the hilly districts of Devonshire, and the more so as buildings like white square-towered churches, and handsome wood-embowered mansions centred in grassy lawns, abound. How I longed to escape from the pent confinement of a small screw steamer, and from the pestilential land of my destination to breathe the scented air, plunge into the deep sequestered dales, and luxuriate in the beauty and fragrance of this terrestrial Paradise, none but the initiated may conceive! but this reward was reserved for those amongst us who should undergo, and escape from, a probationary purgatory on the horrid "coast," and for me, on another occasion—as succeeding

events will disclose — when even absolutely against my will.

Now we rounded a cape ; and Funchal, in a glittering mass of whiteness, emerging from its beautiful bay of liquid azure, broke upon our view, and passing several gaily-painted fishing-boats, turned up at either end, filled with swarthy, red-capped, ringleted fishermen; we reached the mooring-buoy.

The beauty of Funchal, its bay, the surrounding scenery, and the deliciousness of the climate, are indescribable. All was bright and clear. The sun shone bright—the blue of the sea was bright—that of the sky was brighter still—the whiteness of the town, although relieved by the vivid green foliage of the trees which grew among the houses, dazzled the eye—the boats on the beach glittered with brilliant colours—the watermen were dressed in gay scarlet guernseys; and the strand was animated by a mingled crowd, and by stands of bullocks and bullock cars. The scene was like fairy-land ! The city is situated on the declivity of a hill ; the picturesque flat-roofed edifices are built in terraces, each row—as at Bath and Clifton—above the other ; and

the dwellings at the farther end of the town shine between the lofty trees and the still loftier cypresses, which rear their heads in the intervening spaces. In the background, the mountain rising concavely, is necklaced, where cultivation ceases, by the white towers of a castellated building, above which crowning pine-forests frown darkly, while the head of the height is lost in enveloping cloud; and when the mists descend as far as these towers, they are like a tiara set on the brow of the steep. An apparently bottomless ravine, precipitous, wood-clothed, and purple, lies to the right, while blue mists, like sprays of eider-down, may be seen floating across, or resting on, the bosom of the forest mountain.

The passengers all longed to land; but, no—even this favour our fate denied; we only stopped to coal, and were placed in quarantine; which disappointment, though weighing heavily on those who dreaded “the coast,” did not appear in the least to affect the merry Africans before alluded to, who only applied themselves to their libations at the shrine of the jolly god with augmented assiduity.

The evening scene aggravated my desire to land. The land breeze rolling the violet-tinted mists down the mountain side, disclosed the summit glowing with ruddy light, while all below was darkening; propelled from the shore, numerous boats which bounded gaily over the glassy swell, freighted with men and women singing joyously, on their way to their homes in the great Deserta Island; and gently rocking our vessel brought to us a thousand perfumes, which, together with this fresh cool breeze, and the soft strains of a military band mingling with the chimes of bells, it caused to steal across the waters, delighted and soothed every sense. All was calm and serenely beautiful, and one might fancy the view a glimpse of Paradise, but afforded as only to tantalize, were it not for the marring influence of the frowning forts, which seemed misplaced in this peaceful scene, and for the long, low, dark hull, and tall tapering spars of a suspicious-looking craft near us, and which was supposed to be engaged in that odious traffic of human flesh which has branded with horrible notoriety that land to which fate impelled us.

At nightfall we again got under weigh, and with the land breeze filling the sails, soon left Madeira sinking astern ; and while darkness was closing around, a sailor, with a discomfited expression depicted on his countenance, pointed out, following in the wake, and duskily flitting in circles over the surface of the sea, a flock of those mysterious little sea-birds, from whose presence seamen deduce unfavourable omens. Whether their pursuit on this occasion boded good or evil to the Forerunner and its passengers, remains to be discovered ; but as inauspicious circumstances are much calculated to impress even the least superstitious, when already influenced by uncertain fears, the majority of the company retired for the night, bearing an uneasy sensation of impending ill.

CHAPTER II.

DOCTORS AND MERCHANTS.—THE KING AND COURT OF BONNY.—
 AN EDUCATED BLACK.—AFRICAN MISSIONARIES.—DR. BAIKIE.
 —SUNDAY ON BOARD THE FORERUNNER.—THE PEAK OF TENERIFFE.—SANTA CRUZ.

ON the ensuing morning many an anxious glance was cast astern—though none would dare admit superstitious influence—in the hope that the unwelcome visitants, which on the preceding evening had haunted our course, would be found to have disappeared; but no, there was the flock, each bird still skimming in circles over the surface of the sea; one bird now hovering over the foam-crested head of a wave; another descending, lost a moment in the dark depths of a cavernous billow, or pausing an instant to flutter—like a butterfly on a flower—on the bosom of a swell, and away again in incessant gyration with never-tiring wing. Sailors declare that the exact moment of their advent and departure never has been, and never can be, beheld by mortal eye; and thus, as the birds are enshrouded

in mystery, seafaring men imagine them spirits of the deep; and thus investing them with this sacred character, they, regarding them with superstitious reverence, will neither shoot, attempt to capture, or drive them away, nor molest them in any manner.

I now proceed to fulfil my intention to introduce to the public my fellow-passengers, the principal amongst whom consisted of the quaint individual whose portrait has been already penned; his friend, a "Palm-oil doctor," the signification of which singular soubriquet will probably puzzle the reader as much as it once confounded my own faculties—and an ex-naval officer—all of whom had previously frequented "the coast;" a black "gentleman of fortune"—which information he graciously promulgated immediately on his arrival on board; a German Church Missionary; a rubicund-visaged, beetle-browed Baptist preacher; and the now celebrated Dr. Baikie, and his coadjutor, a taciturn German ethnologist and linguist, both of whom were travelling to join the Pleiad, the boat employed in the third, but their first, exploring expedition up the river Niger.

Our friend of the curious countenance—the Buckstone of the party, and who for distinction's sake I shall in future call by that name—had, as it transpired, accompanied one of the former unsuccessful expeditions up the deadly Niger, and was one out of four survivors from a band of one hundred and twenty, the others having fallen victims to the pestilential climate in the space of a few months. He had also resided on the coast, as naturalist to the Earl of Derby, and afterwards as H. B. M. Consul at —, which long residence on the coast, and unscathed emergence from the ordeal of the Niger, caused him to be esteemed among his companions, and very justly, little less than a Salamander.

The Palm-oil doctor was a rough jovial disciple of Æsculapius, whose enigmatical appellation is applied to all surgeons of ships trading in palm oil, and who, in the course of their voyages, having acquired some insight into the trade in that commodity, and discovering therefrom that palm oil is a better paymaster than the god of physic, cast aside pestle and mortar, and become resident agents on the coast for the Liverpool merchants, receiving large commission on their

purchases, and a fixed salary for professionally attending the crews of the vessels which carry the produce to Europe. These agents, if they live—"but there's the rub"—three years, generally realize large fortunes; and our friend had twice braved the terrors of the climate, and was now returning for the last time to complete his fortune, or find a grave. Let us hope the former.

The tribe with which those agents in the Bonny and Calabar Rivers trade principally are Eboes, cannibals,—who will be noticed hereafter—whose monarch had been a great slave-dealer, and had amassed immense wealth by this nefarious traffic in the flesh and blood of his people, but who had been ostensibly converted to Christianity, and being thus civilized had pretended to abandon it, and in lieu had taken to strong waters, and literally made his throne a rum cask.

With this convivial potentate the Palm-oil doctor was an immense favourite, and as, whenever his sable highness or any of his numerous wives were indisposed, he was called upon to render his professional assistance, he became

court physician, receiving for each visit—the only occasions on which he went ashore—about 75*l.*, and his popularity he anticipated would increase, for he was now carrying with him a photographic apparatus with which to “astonish the natives.” Fashion, even at the dusky court of African monarchs, appears to exert its sway, and the services of the court doctor at Bonny became as eagerly sought for among the high and mighty of Bonny, as the physician of St. James’s among the great in Belgravia; but only those whose means permitted payment in doubloons were enabled to secure his attendance, and these are only the chiefs, as the king and head men alone possess coin, which they procure by slave-dealing, while the people themselves get only stuffs in exchange for the palm oil they make. But, apropos of fashion, it has lately appeared that the king of Bonny, in imitation of his brother sovereigns of Europe, aspires to be a patron of literature, and that, following their customs, he actually possesses a poet laureate—not a mere sable improvisatore, but a bonâ-fide white writer, resident somewhere in the north of England; who proudly writes

himself poet laureate to the king of Bonny, and, what is more, possessed a pension from the literary fund. Now this matter is a notable instance of the weakness of human nature. This "poet," of whom few ever heard, and those who have, hear nothing good, is a miserable scribbler of libellous doggrel. Jealous because kings, kaisers, and all the powers that be, do not appreciate his self-estimated talent, he voids impertinent venom against them; yet, because a dirty drunken savage, who can scarcely read, is called king, he, the advocate of equality—the declared despiser of titles—like all those who profess such tenets—is in reality so enamoured of the very sound of royalty, that he proudly designates himself "poet laureate," forsooth, to an uncleanly negro king!

From this digression I now return to the thread of my narrative.

The ex-naval officer was the hero of a somewhat romantic tale. He had married, contrary to the command of his relatives, a young lady rather his inferior in social position and fortune, but his equal, if not superior, in every other point which would render the union desirable.

His parents having disinherited him, he was unable from lack of means to remain in the service; and being thus deprived of his profession, and having learned of an advantageous opening for a merchant at Sierra Leone, he had collected his small capital, and as a last resource was now proceeding with his bride to establish himself at that delectable place, with what success, we shall, in his case, as also in that of the Palm-oil doctor, ultimately discover.

The black "gentleman of fortune" was—what the naturalist termed—"a perfect specimen of the genus educated negro." He was the son of a wealthy black merchant at Sierra Leone, and was under the care of, and in training for, a missionary; had been lionized at Exeter Hall, and presented to the Queen, which last-named honour caused him to pride himself on his courtly manner and experience, and he would in negro *patois*, ludicrously mixed with affectation, reprove any breach of etiquette he observed committed by any of the less sophisticated passengers. His habits and ideas were only comparable to those of an ambitious boa-constrictor aspiring to create a sensation. He gorged to

repletion, and slept all day, awaking only for the next meal, when he would change his splendid attire, and re-appear with startling effect, like a perambulating rainbow surmounted by a black thundercloud.

The Baptist preacher's external appearance, and his characteristics, coincided extraordinarily with Dick Chadband's, by which pseudonym I shall hereafter distinguish him. He was proceeding with his family to the coast for the first time; and so complete and glorious was his ignorance of the locality and its reputation, that he entertained extravagant ideas respecting the salubrity of the climate, and the productions of the soil, and laboured under the delusion that he was journeying to a terrestrial paradise, where he could not only exercise what he, I suppose, imagined, his vocation, but also cultivate lands, make the negroes work, and acquire a fortune. Judging by this, and by his habits, it was obvious that although he adopted a subdued demeanour, and spoke in snuffling tones—a mark of piety as he thought—made broad his phylactery, and constantly obtruded religious topics and discussions, he was a canting fanatic who loved the

things of this life better than the word: the misguided individuals who despatched him, believed it to be his calling to preach.

The character of the German Church missionary contrasted most favourably with that of his "brother labourer," as Chadband delighted to term him. He was a highly-educated and intelligent man, a regularly ordained minister, who spent the whole of his time while on board in translating the Bible into the Foutah-Foulah tongue; and though he never paraded his religion, he, with almost incredible devotion, was returning from England, where he had been offered and had declined a living, to end his days at his post in the wilderness, two hundred miles distant from white faces, where he had buried nine children, and where, it was said, he had civilized a whole tribe, and had established a church and school.

Of the now celebrated Dr. Baikie, the determined leader—as subsequently turned out—of the Niger expedition, and the pioneer of civilization in Central Africa, I need say nothing, as his own deeds are now well known, and his fame second only to that of Livingstone; but in an-

other place I will notice the objects and aim of the expedition, and the geographical problems to be solved, which interesting results this enterprising explorer confidently expected—when last heard from in Central Africa—would be accomplished, and will probably be promulgated before these chapters are concluded.

His German associate was distinguished by taciturnity, and the earnest expression of thought his melancholy features wore—that is, when seen, which occurred but rarely, for his face was usually enshrouded in an impenetrable cloud of tobacco smoke, through which—like clouds of vapour resting on the awful point of Mount Etna—loomed indistinctly his solemn physiognomy.

I now return to my narration of the concurrent events of the voyage.

The morning after our departure from Madeira being Sunday, preparations were made in the saloon for the celebration of divine service, from which circumstance a characteristic incident arose. The Church missionary, as a regularly ordained minister, was invited to officiate, and in compliance with the request, retired to his cabin for the purpose of donning his vest-

ments and procuring his books; but while he was absent the Baptist commenced reading, and the other entering at the moment, and finding his place usurped, although struck with astonishment, resigned it without protest, and meekly sat down to listen. But the congregation demanding to be taught by a pastor of its own persuasion, unanimously appealed against this proceeding, and preferred a petition that the minister should assume the duties devolving on his office, with which request, though much contrary to his inclination, he was constrained to comply. However, this did not suit the views of the dissenter, who vehemently urged, with his hypocritical snuffle, "he had as good a right to preach as his reverend brother," to which the mild divine assented, and expressed the pleasure he would derive in hearing him. But the congregation repeated its demand, and a debate with the contumacious sectarian ensued, the result of which was, that the minister resumed his right, and the contentious schismatic disdaining to receive instruction from any constituted authority, quitted the field, and retreated with his family to the privacy of his cabin, where,

amidst much nasal singing, the Baptist liturgy was celebrated.

Early the ensuing day, the dim outline of the mighty peak of Teneriffe, although eighty miles distant, was discernible, and towards evening that giant height, pointing high into the heavens, and girt about the middle with a belt of cloud, appeared to look down upon us. Now suddenly disappeared, although I had been closely watching them, the little birds, our ill-omened companions; thus was in some measure corroborated a part of the traditions respecting them.

At night we glided under the lee of the land, through the waters of a dark bay, leaving in our wake a serpentine trail of faint blue phosphorescent light. The darkness of this bay was made more visible by the multitude of distant brilliant floating fires, which sometimes appeared to be executing terpsichorean evolutions on the face of the water.

While speculating on the meaning of these we descried the lights of Santa Cruz, and shortly entered the harbour, where our sight was so confused by the number and dazzling brilliancy of

these mysterious flames, as to render us unable to discern any landmark or other distinguishing object which should indicate our position ; and thus, notwithstanding continual sounding, and a careful look-out, nearly ran foul of the mole, then of the shore, and, lastly, of some anchored ships, which only saved themselves by hastily displaying signal lanterns. Thus escaping accidents, and drifting among a crowd of these fires, we discovered that they arose from heaps of pitch and pine-wood burning in braziers on either side of fishing-boats, and we learnt that they were lighted for the purpose of attracting fish. The number of fishermen was so great that it seemed as though the whole of the inhabitants of the island had betaken themselves to the water ; but we ascertained that a solemn fast having been proclaimed, the fishermen were thus diligently plying their nets to meet the unusual demands—unusual except in Lent—for fish.

We lustily hailed these fishermen to get out of the way, but in vain ; they seemed to consider that the harbour belonged rather to them than to strangers, and as they were making a successful haul, declined to afford us accommodation.

Fearful of swamping some of the boats if we proceeded, we drifted along we knew not whither, and although the skipper vehemently swore he would run them down, move they would not. Thereupon he inquired in which direction lay our berth, and begged some one to lead the way; but the fishers instead of complying with the request, replied by brandishing their oars, shouting energetically, talking simultaneously, tossing about their arms like semaphore telegraphs, and performing pantomimic motions expressive of warning, direction, and execration. Their physical contortions, hairy swarthy faces, and dishevelled locks, looming through glare and smoke, made them look like one of the old pictures in which purgatory is portrayed.

The contention with these contumacious water-sprites attracted the attention of a passenger, a Spanish nobleman, son of a late governor of Teneriffe, whose advice to charge the rabble was adopted; and the fishermen, seeing us in earnest, sullenly opened a passage to the right and left, and rowed out of our path, each one—judging by his emphatic tones—invoking on us anything but blessings. The Spaniard

then acted as interpreter, and disclosing his name and rank, authoritatively commanded a sturdy old villain, who had defiantly maintained his position until the vessel's cutwater almost touched his boat, to pilot the way, and the man thus admonished immediately changed his demeanour, and rowed ahead with alacrity. We gained our anchorage, let go the anchor, and were safely moored gently swinging in the harbour of Santa Cruz.

Day dawned bright on this majestic island, disclosing deep ravines, and lofty rugged mountains heaped one above the other, but the giant peak itself is barely visible from the harbour. The white town glittered in the rays of the morning sun, and a cloud overshadowing the black beetling heights, caused it to stand forth from the dark background in gay relief, while the latter loomed majestically grand. Beautiful, this side of the island cannot appropriately be called, for not a tree is to be seen; and at this, the end of the dry season, very little verdure, and that scanty and sunburnt, is visible; but the varied stratum, the stupendous precipices, and the cloud-capped heights are indescribably majestic. The

chaotic confusion of the stratum is remarkable; here it lies horizontally; there runs diagonally; and occasionally rises perfectly vertical, which last species, when rocky, starting frequently sudden, abrupt, and defined, from the crest of some of the ridges, caused the protuberances to present the appearance of a crown of turretted towers, which I could scarce persuade myself they were not in reality.

Shortly after sunrise the captain of the port paid the vessel his official visit, and, condemning us to quarantine, our hopes of once more treading on solid earth before landing on the coast, were again disappointed.

In the afternoon we got under weigh, leaving, on the port-quarter, Grand Canary, lying like a summer cloud on the horizon. We coasted at some distance down the island, and here it sloped softly up to the summit of the peak, and slumbering in the yellow sunbeam, with passing clouds overshadowing and mottling its face, gleamed like a huge bank of opal. The fresh trade winds springing up, the vessel bounded gaily over the bright sea towards the dreaded shores of Western Africa, leaving Teneriffe

growing dimmer and dimmer, until it appeared like a cloud suspended in the sky, and until night hid from the sight even the towering head of the peak.

How many of us will live to see again the land we have left behind ?

CHAPTER III.

A DEAD CALM.—CAPE DE VERDE.—TOWN OF GOREE.—NEGRO-FRENCH CAPTAIN OF THE PORT.—PESTILENTIAL CLIMATE.—CITADEL OF GOREE.—FRENCH TRADE AT GOREE.—THE KROOMEN TRIBE.

AT the expiration of two days after our departure from Teneriffe, we arrived within the torrid zone, but the tropic heat of that fevered region, tempered by cool trade winds, did not prove inconvenient until we neared Cape de Verde, when—as if a foretaste of the horrors of the African climate—we experienced the torments attending the phenomenon—a dead calm.

“Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
’Twas sad as sad could be,
And we did speak, only to break
The silence of the sea.
All in the hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.”—*Ancient Mariner*.

The water glows like a sea of molten brass, and

reflects the fierce fire of the sun, which pours down a sickening heat—pierces everything—causes the very pitch to exude from every seam in the deck, and shines on the exposed side of the rigging with glare so dazzling that the strands of the ropes are undistinguishable, making the outline acutely defined, and each rope like a rod of iron. The atmosphere is hot and heavy, and the heat perfectly insupportable, and it seems to me, if the calm were of long duration, every living thing must die. Men are tormented by a craving, insatiable thirst, a dryness of the skin, and an overpowering lassitude; and, gasping, recline on deck, under the awning. Even the fowls cease cackling and droop their heads; the wings of the sea-birds seemed heavy, and the birds, ceasing their circle, merely followed, resting frequently on the sea; and the very water, divided by the cutting prow of the steamer, passed sluggishly aft with a dull sound.

This thirst, however, our friends, the old Africans, acting on the axiom, “prevention is better than cure,” did their devoir to anticipate, both during the calm and previously, by the imbibition of brandy and water, from sunrise to

sunset, at intervals of about a quarter of an hour ; “*diem morantem frangere mero*”—and beguiled the time by expatiating on the deadly dangers of the coast, with the view of exciting terror amongst us ignorant.

“*Fas porvicaees est mihi Thyiadas.*”

They endeavoured to alarm Dr. Baikie, but their efforts to imbue with fear a mind steadfastly bent on one fixed and noble purpose, and admitting no other sentiment than that of confident hope, were futile ; however, they succeeded in animating with extreme dread the soul of his German associate, whose taciturnity increased, and whose solemn face grew more solemn, and longer, and more melancholy, each hour we neared the coast ; and as they informed him that brandy and water and tobacco were the sole antidotes to “malaria and climate,” the accustomed volumes of smoke, which usually wreathed his temples, hourly grew more dense, and he, like that hero of song, Mynheer Van Dunck, “took brandy and water freely.” Sure am I, he heartily wished that the report of the projected Niger expedition had never reached Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, to fire his soul with aspiration to become a second Mungo

Park; and that he had never heard of the late noble Prince Consort's ambition, that one of the denizens of his Principality should share and reflect on it, the glory of the adventure! They also succeeded in inoculating with fear, and mercilessly demolished the castles in the air of the Baptist preacher, who, doubtless, likewise wished himself safely at home, seated at his "last," and working at his trade, in the town of ———; he too, nothing loth, adopted very cheerfully their advice in one respect, and with what remarkable result will presently appear. But as his blissful ignorance invited misrepresentation, they answered his frequent inquiries concerning the wines produced on the coast, by declaring those mythological beverages superior to anything in Europe, which information appeared to console him for the insalubrity of the climate, but the consolation was cancelled by an addition — "but to drink wine there, is to poison yourself."

On the morning of the third day Cape de Verde was descried, a long, low neck of land, studded with immense trees, and terminating in an elevated headland, and here again our followers deserted. The Cape, at the season we saw it,

little deserved the name "green," for the forests were leafless, and the verdure parched by the burning sun ; but after the fall of the rains, when the trees are covered with foliage, overshadowing the knolls which vary the landscape, and the earth clothed with a green mantle, it fully merits the appellation, and reminds the beholder of an undulating English park. From this headland extends far out to sea, a long crescent-shaped reef, marked only by the leaping spray, and terminating in a perfectly square rock, thence called the "die," where some years ago a vessel was wrecked, and its crew, one and all, murdered by the lawless savages.

Cape de Verde was my first sight of the accursed land of Ham !

Here we beheld some of his benighted descendants, seated in large, double-banked canoes, paddling at tremendous rate and with wonderful precision, while singing in unison with the strokes of their paddles, on which they would for a moment rest ; and then endeavour to overtake our vessel, shouting, clapping their hands, and displaying their white teeth in great glee and astonishment at the steamer's invisible mode of progression.

These canoes were turned up at the bow and stern, beneath both of which projected, four or five feet, a long beak like that of a Romàn war-galley, and the vessels were said to be one huge hollowed log, sharpened at both ends, and finished above with two planks as bulwarks or gunnel, sewed with vegetable fibre to the trunk. The sculls measured apparently about the length of, and were in shape like a spade, and were employed by them as we should use that familiar implement in the act of shovelling earth backwards.

A few hours afterwards, we passed several small rocks, among which one bearing a remarkable likeness to a lion, or, as the herald would describe the similitude, a demi-lion coupé regardant, which, when the beholder nearing the town of Goree has passed, transforms itself into the figure of a lion rampant.

Goree, like a pyramid of edifices crowned by a tall fort, starting suddenly from the sea, wears, when seen from the distance, a cheerful and pleasing aspect; but the voyager having entered the harbour, finds "'tis distance lends enchantment to the view," for the charm, when he approaches, fades away, and at last is utterly de-

stroyed, and the place being devoid of verdure, and built of dusky red-stone, looks dirty and dilapidated.

The island of Goree belongs to France, and is a lofty iron-rock, about a mile in circumference, situated in a bight or bay, distant about eight miles from the mainland on one side, and three or four on the other, and was captured by the British during the last war with our present Allies, but was ceded at the ensuing peace. Situated as it is, directly in the line of the Western African trade, it is a most important station; and the French Government, wiser than ours, which ceded it, and which ought to have maintained it as an outpost, and a check upon French incursions from Senegal to our colonies on the coast, fully appreciates its value, and is strengthening the fortifications, which, together with the town, occupy the whole superficies of the island.

Everything here presented a ludicrous, but most unpleasant contrast to Madeira and Teneriffe; the town appeared dirty and dilapidated and and not a square inch of verdure was visible. The breeze, instead of coming laden with perfume,

bore the taint of the pestilential miasma rising from the mangrove swamps of the distant mainland; and no sooner was our anchor down, than a miserable little "dingy," whose French ensign and yellow flag proclaimed it to be the quarantine boat, pulled by a naked negro, and having a filthy black man seated in the stern sheets, came alongside.

The aforesaid uncleanly black having boarded us, he, in a mixture of Negro-French, and worse English, informed us he was the captain of the port, one having authority, who possessed the power to permit us to land, or deny us the privilege; and with this preamble he demanded our bill of health.

This was handed him, together with a glass of grog, which was added by the advice of Buckstone, who, versed in negro character, and aware of the irresistible fascination, and the ameliorating influence that beverage possesses for the black, declared that its application invariably softens a sable heart inclined to obduracy, and must therefore subdue in this subject any tendency to asperity.

Our friend's calculation did not prove un-

founded; the grog did endow him with a greater share of discernment and penetration than his brother "officials" of Funchal and Santa Cruz; and he graciously accorded us permission to land.

Accompanied by Buckstone, I landed on the jetty, which we found crowded by a particularly diversified rabble, from whom arose a perfect babel of languages. Here were French officers, and soldiers black and white; white merchants, brown people, and negroes of every degree of the semi-nude and nude. The first description chattering as Frenchmen ever do; the second talking together more earnestly, awaiting, and intent on, their expected bales of merchandize; the third, jabbering a horrible *patois*; and the last, men of every race and tribe unintelligibly gabbling in a multitude of gibberish tongues. This mob was so great, I much wondered how so small a rock contained such numbers, and our astonishment was further increased when we advanced into the town, the streets of which we found also densely thronged with similar varieties of the genus homo.

Here were soldiers, whose free, easy, yet

soldier-like costume was pleasing to the eye, wearied with horrid tunics. Brown "*ladies*," attired in every colour of the rainbow, having handkerchiefs wound round their heads, terminating in a peak two feet high; black women naturalized subjects—servants probably—equally gorgeously habited; handsome females of like colour, whose wool was twisted into small ringlets, some inches long—some of whom wore a scarlet fillet encircling their heads,—clad in graceful native garments, covered with gold earrings, bracelets, massive chains, and anklets mixed with beads and coral, all of which jingled as the wearer moved: tall, stately, haughty-looking black men, with hair twisted after the manner of the females, dressed like Arabs in striped toga-like flowing costume, and laden with numbers of leathern snake-like necklaces, amulets, anklets, and other fantastic curiosities, armed sometimes with a musket, or spear and sword; and half-naked negroes, who, chattering to their compatriots, wallowed in the sand. Upon these (the negroes of the inferior and more debased tribes) the haughty blacks cast contemptuous glances, as also at the whites, to

whom, when passing, they made a point not to concede the pathway, but marched straight forward with defiant scornful air.

These stately personages were Mahometans, Jolloffs, the inhabitants of the adjacent mainland, some of whose chiefs, with their retinues, had arrived with a view of ratifying a treaty.

Our landing fortunately occurred in the evening ; I say fortunately, for had it taken place in the daytime, when the streets which are knee deep in sand were burning hot, and the air which even now was oppressively sultry, fevered the skin and flushed the face like the breath from a blast-furnace, we must have succumbed under the exertion of struggling through the sand.

As we toiled on our way, my companion directed my attention to the immense quantity of poultry abounding everywhere, and the multitude of pigs which are to be seen running squealing and squeaking through the crowd—now tumbling against a black, then rebounding against a white man, and now precipitated against a soldier—in which case, as we observed, the unfortunate porker was invariably saluted

with a *sacré* and a kick. Other members of the porcine community are discoverable tethered under sheds, apparently undergoing the process of fattening, and which, happy and contented in present plenty and security, and ignorant of impending fate, seemed to view with proud indifference their less fortunate brethren and the ill-usage they received. Fowls and pigs, it appears, constitute the principal and almost only food of the inhabitants; "which fact," as my companion remarked, "accounted for the determined hostility the soldiers evidently bore towards porkers; for the mainland being so far distant, and apparently desert, depend upon it," said he, "the fat ones are intended for the consumption of the merchants, while the lean kind are reserved for the rations—tough and meagre at the best of times—of the troops, who prospectively punish the poor animal in the flesh for his possible shortcomings when defunct."

The streets of Goree are very narrow; the houses have flat roofs, and are built of a dark-red stone, which gives the place a dreary feature, and which two peculiarities together cause the dilapidated half-finished appearance it presents

when viewed from the roadstead. This stone, which is hard, durable, and like the slag or refuse from a blast-furnace, or like brick too much burnt, is hewn from a layer of a peculiar volcanic substance, which covers to the depth of several feet the rock substratum, composing the island, and the blocks are cemented with lime made from burnt sea-shells. Some of the houses are handsome and spacious, and though he who is pecuniarily in a position, and would avail himself of that advantage, to erect a permanent habitation upon this isolated rock, must possess peculiar taste, yet, curious as the fact may seem, families exist in Goree who for generations have made that sterile islet their home, whose highest hopes are centred in it, and whose greatest ambition is to become the principal person in the small community.

Struggling onward through the deep sand, and streaming with perspiration, we arrived at a gorge in the glacis of the fort, which passage is—on account of six wretched withered paw-paw trees, about six feet in height, three of which were dead, and the other three tenaciously seeking a precarious existence in the dry

sand and hard rock, and literally constituted the sole verdure of the island—dignified with the name of the Promenade.

We reached at last the gate of the citadel, and when within its walls found that the summit of the rock is levelled to form an esplanade or parade ground, in the centre of which is bored an extremely deep artesian well, whence the purest and coldest water—an unspeakable luxury in a tropical climate—is drawn, supplying the whole island, which is otherwise quite dry.

The traveller standing on this elevation of this remote rock, surveys the whole island, while at eventide ascends to his ears a deafening din which rises from the densely-packed buildings of the little world around, and is caused by the drinking songs sung by the military revellers in the adjacent canteen or cabaret—the jabbering of the multitude—the crying of children—the crowing of countless cocks, each one straining his shrill clarion to outcrow his neighbour—and the squealing of tormented and combative pigs; in addition to which sounds, so agonizing to a person of nervous temperament, the nose is assailed by the savour of decaying vegetable

matter wafted from the shore, and by the scents of numberless piggeries.

On remarking to my companion, that if odours like these exist at Gambia—then the place of my destination—they must render the spot so unhealthy, I might abandon all hope of returning to my native land, his reply to the observation was—greatly to my disquietude—“It is worse!”

Goree is garrisoned by marines, who, when the negro tribes become contumacious, sally forth from their stronghold, and in conjunction with the fleet endeavour to chastise them; but it is said that the result of these expeditions is not always attended with that success which usually crowns the efforts in arms of our gallant allies. Indeed, it is reported that a powerful native potentate, named Djumael,* King of Sanaar, a Jolloff country, maintains—and is said to be the only negro king who does possess—a standing army of twelve thousand men, chiefly cavalry, who frequently challenged the French at St. Louis, Senegal, and at Goree, to come forth to meet him, to marshal their forces on

* Now deceased.

the plain, and measure their strength in a fair field, which chivalric invitation has been declined.

The French trade up the rivers is carried on by barter—the medium of traffic on the coast—of blue baft, powder, muskets, beads, &c., for gum-Senegal, bees-wax, ivory, gold, hides, and the ground-nut, which last, when procured, is brought to Goree, and shipped thence for Marseilles, for the purpose of being converted into an oil, which is clear, scentless, burns with a brilliancy almost equal to gas, is particularly adapted for polishing, and so much resembles salad oil that the liquid which fills those bottles, resplendent with smart French labels, purporting the contents to be superfine salad oil, is no more than ground-nut oil slightly refined.

At the back of the island, on the nearest point of the opposite shore, is a settlement called Han or Djan, centred in a waste of sand, where is a native village; where the merchants possess “country houses,” and where, notwithstanding the aridity of the region, they indefatigably pursue agriculture on what are denominated, by a deluding fiction, farms, which

apparently yield but little return for the so-called cultivation, and which really is an exemplification of patience and perseverance, and the pursuit of tillage under difficulties. However, I suppose a desert producing camel-thorns is a garden in comparison with a rock. This portion of the coast is colonized by Kroomen, whose country is the Fish coast, extending between Capes Mesurado and Palmas, but whose settlements are to be found along the whole coast. This interesting tribe will be further noticed hereafter.

As night closed around we descended from the height, and after refreshing the inward man, and indulging in a game of billiards at a café, we returned on board the Forerunner, which shortly afterwards put to sea, and again rejoined us the ominous flock of mysterious sea-birds.

CHAPTER IV.

A FLYING FISH.—A TORNADO.—THE RIVER GAMBIA.—TOWN OF
BATHURST.—MISSIONARIES AT BATHURST.

WE quitted Goree while the blazing sun sank suddenly—as is the case in the tropics, where it descends at once into darkness, and the shades of night immediately close around—beneath the wave, as though its fires were extinguished by the waters, which, like the too ambitious Semele, were converted into liquid flame by the glory of the embrace.

Sunset, in and near the tropics, though thus lacking the sweet soft gloom of twilight, which renders in more northern climes that calm hour so enchanting, is, though less peacefully beautiful, more magnificent; but this evening, its splendours being chastened, and the light prolonged by the effulgent rays of a tropical full moon, it partook of the special beauties of that hour in both regions, and this union produced an un-

usually pleasing scene: the ruddy orb leapt below the liquid flame, tinting the foam with delicate violet; then the light of the moon, struggling for mastery with the rays of the departing day, began to silver the yards and masts, against the lower parts of which, shone with curious contrasting effect the glare from the lamps in the saloon.

This was pointed out to passengers generally, by Buckstone, whose soul, though cast in comic mould, was not insensible to the beauties of nature. He had collected his audience, and was eloquently expatiating upon the scene, when his harangue was brought to an abrupt termination. A whiz! was heard and some missile rushed close by the speaker's eye; scattered the congregation; and, proceeding on its way, first knocked the German's precious pipe from his mouth, and then struck the black "gentleman" on his gorgeous evening waistcoat, and apparently "doubled him up." The startled speaker raised his hand to his eye, to *feel*—as he said—if that organ was injured: we all expected to be boarded by pirates at least; the ladies were considering whether it would not be interesting

to scream, and some of us turned hastily and inquiringly to the seeming wounded man, who, rising, held aloft, and exhibited to our astonished vision, a huge flying fish, which, attracted by the ship's lights, had jumped at them, and nearly cleared the vessel. Several fell on board subsequently, in pursuit of which the black cook sprawled on all fours as he collected the floundering spoil, and grinning from ear to ear with delight, and showing us his white teeth, made us long for to-morrow and for breakfast, by informing us, "Buckra like dem too much."

While we were meditating an adjournment to the saloon, one of the old Africans, taking the skipper by the arm, pointed out to him a dense, yellow murky haze obscuring the horizon, the presence of which being thus indicated, and declared to portend a tornado, caused the master to make a speedy retreat to his cabin in order to consult the barometer, the mercury in which he expected to find rapidly descending, the prognostic of a gale. He announced on his return that the glass exhibited no signs of an impending hurricane, but the weather-wise Africans persisted in their original prediction, and said we should see

whether they or the glass were most trustworthy, upon which the cautious master promulgated the order to make all taut and snug in preparation for the brewing gale.

Now we returned to the saloon, where Chadband, adopting the advice of the old Africans, with regard to brandy and water as an antidote to malaria, imbibed tolerably freely, and concluded, when he went to his cabin, by ordering thither a bottle of that most agreeable medicine; and where, judging by what occurred on his next appearance in public, he must have frequently repeated the prescription.

Early the next morning the skipper announced that the mercury was going down with extraordinary rapidity, and in a few moments the tornado was upon us. First, there was a dead calm, a lull of the wind, a death-like stillness among the elements, and the yellow haze of the evening gathered into a thick white wall of mist, which advanced towards us. As this veil approached nearer, the waves curled with whitened crests, and when yet closer—but still, at some distance—though the air around us was dead, and blue the sky, a rushing soughing noise—like

the sound of the blast coursing through a forest was heard; at length the mantle was thrown around us, and with it the gale in all its fury burst upon us, laying the vessel on her beam ends, whistling and shrieking through the cordage, flattening the very waves with its weight, as though a roller had passed over the surface of the sea, and down came the hurtling rain in pelting torrents. The ship speedily righted, her head was brought to wind, and soon we saw the hurricane, like a lifted curtain, passing away as rapidly as it came, disclosing the blue sky and the bright face of the sun.

Such was the gale which caught H.M.S. Heron unexpected and unprepared, and involved the vessel and crew in one common fate.

Presently we found ourselves progressing on the broad breast of the river Gambia, which name signifies clear water, but certainly in this, the rainy season, a misnomer, as the stream flowed dead and sluggish, and the water was literally thick as mud. In breadth it is a noble river, so broad, its banks are not visible; but as its boundaries consist of mangrove swamps, it can scarcely be said to flow between banks.

Then, as the river gradually narrows, the tops of some trees become discernible, but still almost obscured by a thick yellow mist, which, laden with miasma arising from the decaying vegetable deposits, reeking and festering in the swamps, envelopes, and like a pall, as characterizing the deadliness of the climate, overhangs the land.

Such 'is the atmosphere the lieges of the island of St. Mary, and of the town of Bathurst, Gambia, are doomed to inhale,—and what wonder its climate is so deadly! Here, too, was I, at that time, condemned to sojourn.

However, as we neared the dreaded town of Bathurst the aspect much altered and improved, and the place, sparkling white and gay in the sun, built at the water's edge, on glittering silver sand, with noble-looking houses shining through a terrace of green trees, and apparently embosomed in verdure, seemed more like a city of palaces than the place of purgatory usually represented.

We soon anchored, and at this period Chadband made his first appearance on déck since his retirement the previous evening, and now

appeared the remarkable effect of the too frequent repetition of the jolly African's prescription. As he came up the ladder he exclaimed, "Vy, we 'ave not moved since last night!" and thereupon proceeded to denounce the conduct of the captain and the mail agent in allowing the vessel to be detained, and proceeded to aver that the ship's company had been intoxicated all night—"in fact, the captain, crew, and fireman, and the whole ship 'ad been drunk fore and aft," and the first "'ad been standing on his 'ead on the main-truck."

As the greater portion of the town of Bathurst is below the level of the water, it presents a bird's-eye view to the spectator on board ship, and this view I will endeavour to describe:—The foreground is occupied by a row of buildings, which, peeping through a terrace of trees, and being detached and apparently built in the Italian style of architecture, and no shops visible, reminded me of some parts of the park at Cheltenham. In the background are seen the feathery tropical willows, and lofty drooping palms, which raise their heads between the tenements, while the town view is bounded by a light and pretty

tower, apparently the tower of a church. The surrounding expanse is a vast unbroken, monotonous, swampy level, overrun with the poisonous mangrove, and studded here and there by the funereal palm, which, like the plumes of a hearse, seem emblematic of the proverbial deadliness of the climate.

As soon as the vessel anchored, the officers of the port boarded, and here the passengers experienced the advantage of touching at a port belonging to free and enlightened England, for instead of being condemned to quarantine, as at Funchal and Santa Cruz, they were permitted to land; accordingly we all prepared to go on shore; Buckstone in order to pay his respects to the governor of the colony, myself for the purpose of receiving instructions whether to remain in this delectable locality, or proceed to another possessing an equally unenviable reputation,—Sierra Leone; and the black gentleman with the view of creating a sensation among his sable compatriots by the splendour of his apparel, the like of which, as far as magnificence was concerned, was, I will venture to say, never before seen in Bathurst, and was certainly the

masterpiece of that enterprising firm, Messrs. Moses and Son.

I anxiously anticipated an interview with the Governor; firstly, because I was in suspense respecting, and desired to be acquainted with, the place of my destination; secondly, because during the whole voyage I had heard from the old Africans so many jests and stories at the expense of this personage, whose sayings and doings had apparently entitled him to the distinction of being the standing joke and butt for the facetious of the coast, and I therefore expected some amusement in observing his peculiarities. Indeed, I must confess, I doubt the purity of the motives of our friend, and cannot but suspect his wish to pay his respects arose rather from the hope he would in so doing collect a stock of facetiæ to distribute down the coast, than from the extreme loyalty which, as he said, induced him to wait upon the "Queen's representative." As this individual was a notorious "character" on the coast, and will frequently figure in these pages, I proceed to introduce him by repute, and shall presently present to the reader the personage himself.

My companion stated he had risen from obscure origin to a commission in one of her Majesty's native regiments, from which position he had, by dint of sycophancy, of Hibernian "blarney," and loud and constant blazoning his merits, deeds, and virtues in his own despatches and writings, risen further until he attained the governorship of this little colony,—which office was, in his estimation, the very acme of exaltation, so great as to render incumbent to his dignity the assumption of the regal "We," and to dub himself "The ——" by which title, or as the "Great O——," this potentate was generally known.

While engaged in making preparation for shore, several boats came alongside, and immediately afterwards a scuffling noise, betokening the act of a number of bipeds descending hurriedly down the ladder, was heard, and heralded by this, and by outbursts of merriment, a bevy of emaciated miserables—joyous withal—burst into the saloon, while some forcibly took possession of the steward's pantry. These last turned out to be some of the officers belonging to the garrison, indulging in, what they stated to be,

the only excitement the monotonous station of Bathurst afforded, in boarding the steamers as they arrive, and as provisions are scarce, and choice circumscribed,—endeavouring to wheedle the steward out of some of his English hams, preserves, &c., for the “mess,” and hence their mirth, which, displayed by such pallid wretches, was of a ghastly nature, like the merriment a skeleton might be supposed to exhibit.

One of the boats alongside was a small dingy, whereby hangs a tale, which I tell as ’twas told me, and the truth of which was subsequently corroborated by my own experience. The missionaries feeling the want of creature comforts, and observing that the officers of the garrison, by the aid of their boat, managed to secure these carnal advantages, bethought themselves that they too, could they but obtain a boat, might participate in the luxury. They might of course purchase a boat, but this did not suit them, and the question arose how to obtain one for nothing? This would puzzle most people, but for missionaries, who are enabled always to draw on the inexhaustible exchequer of a too credulous

public, and on the purses of venerable spinsters, and the school-boys and school-girls of England, the matter was easy. They accordingly compiled a flaming account of the extraordinary manner in which their efforts to propagate the Gospel had been crowned with success in Bathurst; how many negroes had been received into the pale of the Church; how edifying were their lives; and that, in fact, the populace had become so virtuous, nothing further remained to them to effect in that quarter. But alas! alas! the benighted ignorance and vice in which the tribes across the river were steeped, was something too awful to contemplate; they knelt to them, crying across the river, "Come over, and help us!" and their hearts yearned to respond to the call for labour in such a field, but an insuperable difficulty presented itself. The river! they possessed no boat in which to cross that stream, but if they had only a boat, a multitude might be gathered into the fold. They could not purchase one themselves, because they had to deny themselves many luxuries, many comforts, nay even necessities. Well, next vessel brought out a boat, and that boat had been at Bathurst three years,

and had never moved from the shore, except when the steamers arrived, and then on the same errand as the garrison boat!

In looking at the officers, I imagined I discovered in the wasted features of one of them, the traces of familiar lineaments, and I was cheered—but depressed at the thought of what I myself might become—to find I was not mistaken; the apparition was—the shadow of his former self—a gentleman I had known during my rambles in the West Indies, and now aide-de-camp to the Great O——.

We greeted one another heartily, and he, with the view of inviting me, if disengaged, to his quarters, inquired where I intended “putting up?”

“At the hotel, to be sure,” I replied; whereupon a shout of laughter arose from Buckstone and the military, which was elicited by my fancying that Bathurst boasted this convenience; and one said, “Why, there’s not only no hotel, but there’s no barber, and we all cut one another’s hair, and the Great O—— makes M—— cut his, but does not condescend to operate in return.”

The reader may imagine my feelings on being consigned to such a savage country.

The aide-de-camp compelled Buckstone and myself to accompany him to breakfast at the barracks, and promised, after the conclusion of the repast, to pilot us to the palace of the Great O——, and accepting the invitation we entered the official boat.

CHAPTER V.

MOTLEY INHABITANTS OF BATHURST.—ARID SCENERY.—“GAMBIA CUSTOM.”—THE JOLLOFFS.—COSTUME AT BATHURST.—EMACIATED APPEARANCE OF THE GARRISON.—RAVAGES OF CLIMATE.—GOVERNMENT HOUSE.—ORDERS TO PROCEED TO SIERRA LEONE.

ACCORDINGLY we disembarked on the shining sands, whose dazzling whiteness was marred only by streaks of coal-dust washed ashore from the steamers, and we proceeded under the shade of the umbrageous caoutchouc trees which line the beach.

The scene was enlivened by a motley crowd of bipeds and quadrupeds, the latter in the shape of the little ponies of the country standing tethered under the trees, belonging to the mercantile white population who, awaiting their merchandize, were seated in their stores, and the former consisting of persons of every gradation of colour from emaciated pure white, white-by-law, Mustaphinas, Mustees, Quadroons, Sambos, down to the blackest jet, dressed in every

variety of costume, from scarlet military full dress, coloured clothes, cool white linen, down to little more than the primitive fig-leaf; here were chattering gaudily-dressed Jolloff women, who, with bright bandanas bound round their heads, looked like animated tulips; stately lounging Jolloff men; tall, stiff, black soldiers; naked children covered with beads; and stalwart negroes clad like Jolloffs, but less handsome, and possessing in a greater degree the Negro peculiarity of physiognomy, but yet less so than the semi-nude savages, who were to be seen landing bags from large and curiously-carved canoes—similar to those already described in Chapter III.—the bows of which were filled with hideous idols cut in mahogany, and which deities were placed there, and would discover—as these benighted Pagans believe—the unseen dangers of the ocean. The first were Mandingoes, the natives of adjoining countries, and the last were Shirirees, a tribe inhabiting the most distant point of the opposite coast, engaged in discharging a cargo of grain and ground-nuts.

We proceeded on our way, and as we trudged along, the proverb, “All is not gold that glitters,”

was exemplified to us, in that, though the bright sand was pleasing to the eye at distant view, it was far from agreeable when near, for the whole island and the roads of Bathurst consist of sand knee-deep, and burning like hot ashes, which, when the wind blew, was whirled in clouds into the eyes, nose, and mouth; its glare dazzled the vision; and its depth was such as to require severe struggle in progress. The verdant appearance of the town, as seen from the river, is likewise deceptive, the land, as far as the eye can reach, being a sandy waste, devoid of timber or shrubs, the only attempt at vegetation the row of caoutchouc trees which, as I have mentioned, front the water; a few cocoa-nut and palm-trees, a few scrubby paw-paw trees, some willows, bananas, Oleanders, Quayves, and Barbadoes' Pride—which last alone flourishes luxuriantly—and a few other imported shrubs, struggling for precarious existence in the sandy soil. The only objects which maintain a promising appearance are the buildings, and these are handsome, imposing structures, really picturesque, built of the same material as those at Goree, but white-washed, erected rather in the Portuguese style,

generally with flat roofs, and possessing broad and lofty arched piazzas, supported sometimes by substantial stone pillars, running the whole length of the edifice. Thus, in one quarter of the town, where several houses adjoin one another, the foot-way is like the Colonnade under the Opera, Hay-market, minus the glittering shops ; for although these exist here also, such as they are, are dirty and dusty, and emit intolerable odours, mingled with effluvia emanating from the stables, which are generally situated in the basement story. But the traveller is almost unable to notice or feel interested in anything, his whole energies being directed towards wading through the sand, endeavouring to exclude the noisome effluvia which everywhere assails his nostrils, and if he is about to undergo a sojourn, his mind is engrossed in bemoaning the hardship of his lot. Never shall I forget this my first experience of the amenities of Gambia, and the horrors of the walk ! In addition to the evils above enumerated, the heat, although the hour was only 10 A.M., was intolerable, and made me feel sick and giddy ; the wind, when breathing across the face of a whitewashed wall, blew fiery and suffocating, like the air from

a furnace; and long shall I remember, how eagerly I sought for, and with what relief I skulked under, when found, a strip of shade, were it only the dark side of a wall, and the shadow only two feet broad!

We had not proceeded far on our journey, before I was presented with a specimen of what my facetious companion termed “Gambia custom.” We beheld a young white man, whose attire was crumpled, his face flushed and fevered, and who, as he cantered along on a small pony, swayed from side to side, evidently under the influence of what my companion termed “Climate,” apparently not having as yet recovered the effects of last night’s potations. This apparition turned out to be a government *employé*, with whom the aide-de-camp was acquainted, to whom the latter cried—“Hallo! where did you get my horse?” “Your horse?” exclaimed the other, interrogatively. “Yes, my horse,” replied the first speaker. “No, I tell you it’s mine,” said he of the seedy appearance. “Indeed it is not,” persisted the aide-de-camp, who continued, “How did you get it? What have you been doing? Where have you been?” “Oh,” re-

sponded the official, looking about with a puzzled air, "I thought the horse was mine! Well, never mind; I suppose it is all the same;" and after a little reflection, "I got drinking whiskey punch, and all that kind of thing, and I believe I slept on a sofa at ——'s." Saying which, the worthy galloped off, laughing, as though he had performed some meritorious action, and leaving dubious by what means he had become possessed of the steed. We afterwards saw the same individual dismounting from the stolen horse, and endeavouring to scramble on his own, which his black servant was leading; but so stupified was his brain, that, having alighted, he forgot which animal was his own, and attempted to seat himself on the one from which he had just descended; while the groom, grinning from ear to ear, his white teeth glancing, and his eyes rolling—"Heigh, massa! Dat's de way for drinkum!" then in a reproachfully severe tone—"You been out all night—drunkum again! dis no do!" and he pursued sententiously—"Look you face; him red for true. Buccra hab two face—one white, toder red. Buccra face, one while white" (pale) "with sickee" (illness); "noder time red with drinkee."

At last he departed, and my companion looking after him, exclaimed—"There's climate for you! When that man dies, his death will be laid to the baneful climate." What wonder that in less than two months that youth was dead?

Our journey through the town, notwithstanding the attendant evils, was diverting, inasmuch as occasionally we could see a man, though clad in the graceful flowing costume already alluded to, wearing an English hat on his head, the effect of which combination of costume was inexpressibly ludicrous. Sometimes we would meet a female covered with gold, with anklets and armlets, and innumerable other savage decorations, dressed in native garments and having sandals on her feet, but having English peculiarities, not to say fashions, ingrafted on these garments, as, for instance, the short outer robe would be adorned with frills or flounces. These people, I knew by the ringleted hair, were Jolloffs, and I ascertained they were emigrants from their own country, and were chiefly household servants, whose religious tenets forbade them to adopt European attire, but whose association with Europeans had taught them—like our English

domestics—to imitate the dress of their mistresses, and they had managed to adopt a combination of both costumes. The remaining pedestrians, though externally less amusing, were infinitely more interesting; the traveller encounters perhaps a musician marching along, strumming on banjos, and singing to the music; crowds of gris-gris covered Jolloffs and Mandingoes, some of whom, I remarked, when they passed a white man, cast on him, as a detested Christian, a glance of contempt—indeed, one old malignant wheeled about after we passed, and with a defiant gesture spat at our feet—petty chiefs, or perhaps Marabous (priests) attended by a sword, spear and bag bearer—the latter containing the Koran—and black soldiers, while the rest of the wayfarers consisted of white and black men, on horseback.

After undergoing severe toil we arrived at the barrack, and much surprised was I, on finding that the tower I had descried from the sea-view, instead of belonging to the temple of peace, pertained to the more warlike edifice. When the officers had assembled at the table, on beholding their respective visages, I thought I had

encountered a synod of patriarchs of old, as one and all displayed depending beards that would have done honour to a Nazarene; and the effect was grotesquely enhanced by the emaciated physiognomy of the wearers, whose eyes were dull and leaden, like those of boiled fish—and who, with these luxuriant hirsute appendages, possessed nothing but bristles on their heads, the hair having been shaved off in the fevers they had suffered in the unhealthy season. . Another peculiarity distinguishing these persons—and one which afforded me much speculation—was a galvanic shock which now and again shook their attenuated frames; but this remarkable shudder was only, as I afterwards learnt, the remains of ague attacks. This illness or the ravages of the climate appears to injure the brain, so much so as to cause an idiotic vacancy in the features; an inability to express the thoughts in words; a forgetfulness of sentences and loss of ideas; but though these gentlemen were thus afflicted, they did not forget to unite in loudly bewailing the stern fate which had consigned them to such an unpleasant quarter, where was, they averred, neither society, amusements, books,

or even food, and where there was nothing earthly to eat except poultry, and no occupation (I suppose because military men are not much addicted to literary pursuits) except playing cards, quarrelling, and drinking. The place is garrisoned by a detachment of one company from each of the three West India Regiments, and the officers serve one year on the coast, at the expiration of which period they return to England, where they are permitted to remain a year, in order to recruit their health before re-joining their regiments in the West Indies.

Bathurst was formerly garrisoned by a detachment from, or wing of, the African Regiment, a corps of white soldiers, condemned for crimes, but whose consequent punishment was remitted on condition of service in this regiment, hence called a condemned regiment, of which numerous traditions survive. It is said that officers and men were alike reckless and insubordinate, especially as, in the case of the former, death had placed an offender beyond punishment of man, before authority for a court-martial could be received from England, or had effectually disposed of prosecutor and witnesses, or perhaps

all. In one of these cases a Colonel P——, finding but six or eight rooms in barracks, and coveting these, presumed, on his authority, to order all his juniors to vacate, and thereupon took possession of the whole building. The ejected remonstrated, but, obtaining no redress, reported this tyrannical conduct to the Horse Guards; but when the order for the supercession and trial of the commander arrived at Bathurst, he and all the disputants were defunct. Three governors lie buried in the cemetery, but exactly in what spot none can tell, for, though monuments were sent out by their friends in England, when the stones arrived, those individuals who had buried the officials had followed them to the shades, and their successors knew not where to place the memorials. With tales such as these was the breakfast hour beguiled, together with the standard subject, the saying of the “Great O——,” whose latest pomposity had been exhibited at dinner on the eve of St. Patrick’s Day, when he said in his speech, “The O——’s heart throbs when he thinks of the West India Regiments, as the *eminence* he has attained has been through them;” and—when he saw his audience

smiling, as though they imagined it was “blarney,” and forgetting that they smiled at the idea of his eminence—he added, laying his hand on his heart, “The O—— says it—it is enough.”

After breakfast I ascended the highest elevation in the island, which is the summit of the tower before mentioned, and from this eminence I surveyed the whole of the island of St. Mary : a vast unbroken dreary plain of malaria-exhaling jungle ; the mephitic vapours arising from which, in the day time, make the remainder of the landscape—an arid sandy track, devoid of any tree but a few palms, and the naked baobab, and of even the variety of a knoll—quiver and dance in the sun ; while at night it is enshrouded in low-lying mist. The island is found to be but a sandbank, of horse-shoe form, the interior of which lies below the level of the sea and river ; the front, a little raised, opposes a barrier to the waters, and on the top of the bank the houses are built : the remainder of the island is occupied by a sandy road passing towards the mainland ; the cemetery twice the size of the town ; and endless mangrove swamps. And this was the region in which I was doomed to

sojourn, and celebrated in a printed song, shown me by the officers, written by the pompous O——, as a “place of wealth and beauty!” to which he poetically invited the English public to flock.

About twelve o'clock we descended the tower, and started for Government House; and, proceeding on our way, we passed an iron market-place in the course of erection, the present market being the shade of the caoutchouc trees, where Jolloffs and mandingo men lounged, smoked, and chatted; while the women, the vendors, squatted on the sand with their merchandize displayed before them, wrangling, chaffering with soldiers and other purchasers, and scolding their naked bead-covered progeny who wallowed in the sand. As the only merchandize I could discover consisted of dried fish, a few paw-paws and sweet potatoes, and perhaps a yam or so from Sierra Leone, a few yards of cotton stuffs, and natural curiosities, such as green parrots and monkeys, the utility of the new market appeared dubious; and so scanty was the exhibition of edibles, if the inhabitants depended on the market for supply,

the officers might justly complain of the scarcity of food.

After toiling knee-deep through the burning sand, we reached Government House, a handsome edifice; and, as the thermometer was standing one hundred and thirty-five degrees in the shade, I was glad to avail myself of the kindly shelter of a roof.

We were speedily ushered into the presence of the Great O——, whose reception was invested with an air of the most supreme condescension, as with a histrionic wave of the hand, and a pompous “Be seat-ed, gen-tle-men,” he motioned us to seats, in a manner worthy the monarch of a mighty kingdom, “strutting his little hour” on the boards of a minor theatre, and especially ludicrous in the governor of a petty colony; the directorship of which, few—even in these days, when a poor gentleman must take whatever office he can get—can be found to accept. This potentate, in reply to my queries, graciously imparted his commands, I should proceed to Sierra Leone; whereat I somewhat rejoiced, well aware that, however horrible a place it might be, it could not be worse, and

might be better, than Gambia. We speedily bowed ourselves from his Excellency's presence, and I spent the remainder of the day in exploring the town of Bathurst; and as I returned to sojourn here, and travelled in the surrounding country, I reserve for another occasion a further account.

In the evening we returned to the Forerunner, which shortly afterwards put to sea, followed still by the flock of sea-birds.

CHAPTER VI.

MONOTONY OF A SEA-VOYAGE.—OBJECT OF THE NIGER EXPEDITION.

—“LIFE IN A PALM-OIL RIVER.”—GAIN AT THE RISK OF LIFE.

—FIRST VIEW OF CAPE SIERRA LEONE.—A LOVELY CHARNEL-HOUSE.—ARRIVAL AT SIERRA LEONE.

AWAY again on the broad bosom of the ocean, doomed for days to suffer the monotony of the wide expanse of waters, with no amusement to occupy the time and enliven the weary hours, except the diversion derivable from noticing the peculiarities exhibited by the passengers, and with nothing to vary the sameness of the sea-voyage, save observation of the animated frequenters of the seas.

However, to remark these last, was to me a source of never-ending interest,—to watch the silver flash of the flying-fish, as it glanced from wave to wave, tipping the crest of each billow, in order to moisten its fins, reminding me of an Irish horse leaping a stone wall, and, almost like a white sea-bird, away again in flight from its

relentless pursuers in the waters, only to fall a victim in the miserable destiny of its creation, to the necessities of the enemies of the air ; to note the motions, and speculate upon the flock of sea-birds which again had rejoined, and had, ever since our departure from Madeira, followed incessantly in our wake. Whether their presence boded good or evil to the Forerunner and its passengers, remains to be seen ; but with respect to the supposed invisibility of their advent and departure, I, who, prompted by curiosity, had been ever watching them closely, and had observed that, whenever we approached land, they suddenly vanished, without my being able to discover the exact period of their flight, and returned no sooner than the land again grew dim, am inclined to give credence to the tale ; but as they rejoined in a flock, consisting apparently of the same numbers as that which had left, it almost seemed that the flock which had borne us company from Madeira was the identical one now following, and interest was mingled with wonder at their marvellous strength and swiftness ; for even if the flock was not the same, certain I am that those birds which had followed